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AUTHOR Erb, Michele J.
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ABSTRACT

Defining "participation" as subordinate involvement with decision making in the work process, a study examined how a group of subordinates interpreted or made sense of participation, and the role the leader played in the sense-making process. Interviews and observation techniques were used to capture the sense-making of individuals in one particular work group (10 employees and 1 group leader) involved in developing computer networking facilities for a large midwestern university. Results showed an environment where general job responsibilities of individuals and goals of the work group were determined by management with very little participation from work group members, while each subordinate had virtually total control over his or her work. Further, results showed a participatory work group characterized by contradictions that existed between areas where participation was encouraged, allowed, and expected, and areas where non-participation was expected and assumed. Within this context, the group leader managed the meaning of participation by avoiding details, not assigning tasks or priorities, and remaining vague in certain areas where participation was encouraged. At the same time, the leader presented things as explicit, factual, and given in areas where non-participation was expected and assumed. Findings suggest that how leaders communicate can be a fruitful area for organizational communication research. (One table of data is included; and an appendix contains a coding manual. There are 36 references. (Author/SR)

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Making-Sense of "Participation": An Exploratory Study of the Relationship Between Leadership and the Sense-Making Process of Subordinates

by
Michele J. Erb

2465 Cecilia Drive
Villa Hills, KY 41017
(606)341-7520

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This study uses participation as an example of a relevant phenomenon organizational members make sense of. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into how a group of subordinates interpret or make sense of "participation" and the role the leader has played in the sense-making process. Interviews and observations are used to understand what sense subordinates make of participation and to gain insight into how a leader might "manage the meaning" of participation. The results give a picture of a participatory work group that is characterized by contradictions. participation is encouraged, allowed, and expected and at the same time non-participation is expected and assumed. Within this context, we find a group leader who manages the meaning of participation by avoiding details, not assigning tasks or priorities, and remaining vague where participation is encouraged. At the same time, the leader presents things as explicit, factual, and given where non-participation is expected and assumed.

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Making-Sense of "Participation": An Exploratory Study of the Relationship Between Leadership and The Sense-Making Process of Subordinates

Introduction

Over the past several decades organizational researchers, and managers as well, have been somewhat enamored with the notion of involving subordinates in the work process. Although the ways in which and the degree to which this involvement occurs varies greatly the use of the term "participation" to describe this involvement is almost universal. Involving subordinates in the work process or participation has been hypothesized to facilitate outcome variables such as production, motivation, decision quality, acceptance and satisfaction (for example Vroom 1976; Vroom & Jago, 1978, Field, 1982; Likert, 1961; Likert, 1967). Research, however, has produced mixed results (see, for example, Warner & Gooding, 1987a and 1987b; Miller & Monge, 1986). It is hypothesized here that in order to gain insight into any relationships between participatory management practices and organizational outcome variables researchers must first have a clearer picture of what participation is and how it functions at the individual and dyadic levels. This study attempts to do this by studying the communicative interactions of individuals in an organizational work group.

Review of Literature

Participation

Participation is most commonly associated with the concept of subordinate involvement in the work process. This involvement could be characterized by anything from contributions to suggestion boxes to total decision-making responsibilities. This study, and much of the literature on participation, is primarily concerned with participation concepts that stress involvement in decision making. Locke and Schweiger (1979) and Vroom (1960) define participation as joint decision making. In describing what he calls the "Ideal Managerial Climate," Redding (1972) characterizes participation as when employees engage in making decisions that are close to them and affect them.

Participation is commonly characterized as a group phenomenon (e.g. Likert, 1961, 1967; Vroom and Yetton, 1973) but is less commonly characterized as a phenomenon that occurs and can be studied in relationship to various units of analysis. An exception to the emphasis on participation as a group phenomenon is the work of Miller and Monge (1987). They differentiate between two models of participation: the collective model and the individual model. For them, the crucial difference is "whether the organization is viewed as a collective activity in which the equitable treatment of all members is desired or an individual activity in which each employee strives to maximize his or her own outcomes" (Miller, 1988, p. 700). Miller and Monge's collective model is characterized by employee involvement in work group meetings, production committee meetings and other group

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meetings while the individual model is characterized by employee interaction with other departments, other employees, and with the employee's supervisor (Miller & Monge, 1987). Participation at the individual level is characterized by a much higher degree of involvement at the dyadic level between superior and subordinate than would be expected at the group or collective level. In this way the individual model of participation assumes a dyadic model of participation as well.

For example, consider two concepts that have been discussed as characteristics participatory management systems: delegation and autonomy. According to Heller and Yukl (1969, p. 230), "delegation refers to decisions that the manager allows subordinates to make on their own." In this way, subordinates are participating or involved in decisions that affect them--in fact they have total control over the decision if it is delegated to them--but their superior has in affect exerted a high degree of control over what arenas the subordinate will be able to participate in. This implies both a dyadic and individual level of participation.

Relatedly, one way a subordinate can be involved in work related issues, and in particular in decisions being made about that work, is by having a high degree of autonomy or a high degree of freedom over the way in which that work is done. From this perspective participation can be viewed as a dyadic level phenomenon--superior/subordinate interact concerning what work is to done--and an individual level phenomenon--subordinates determine the work process itself.

This discussion of what level of analysis is most appropriate for the study of participation suggests that all levels are justifiable but it also suggests that all levels should be studied--perhaps simultaneously--and that the concept of participation can be informed by studying how it is enacted at each level.

Participation has been hypothesized to be positively linked to satisfaction and production although, as stated earlier, the results of these studies are mixed (Vroom 1976, Vroom & Jago, 1978, Field 1982, Likert, 1961, Likert, 1967). In general, the relationship between these variables is thought to be complicated and indirect at best (Warner & Gooding, 1987a and 1987b, Miller & Monge, 1986). At worst, critics of the human relations approach to management suggest that there is little evidence to support the notion that participation is something that contributes to satisfaction in general or to a positive attitude on the part of the "average" employee (if there is such a thing) (Perrow, 1986).

Sense Making

How, then, does a subordinate come to understand what participation means and what decision are to be made by whom? In this study a naturalistic interpretive perspective is taken when attempting to answer this question. Interpretivists reflect a concern for social order, but they treat society as constructed through the subjective experiences of its members (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, Putnam, 1982 and 1983). A naturalistic approach "aims to describe and to understand organizational reality as it is without questioning what it could or should become" (Putnam, 1983, p. 53).

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The interpretive perspective, therefore, is based on notions of role-taking and shared meanings as forming the organization. According to Krone, Putnam, and Jablin (1987):

> Individuals respond to others based on role-taking and shared meanings for words and actions These meanings are derived symbolically through the mutuality of experience and through negotiating consensual interpretations of organizational events and activities (p. 29).

From this perspective the organization is thought of as:

> . . the spoken system of symbols, symbolic forms, and meanings that constitutes and enacts a common sense of work-life. The assumption is that a particular sense, a situated system of symbols, symbolic forms, and meanings is organization specific. Thus the immediate task is to discover and interpret the spoken system that is used in specific socio-cultural contexts (Carbaugh, 1988, p. 216).

As organizational members interpret and make sense of their environment this interpretation or sense-making process is continually affected by the interactions and coordinated behaviors of the people in that environment (Weick, 1979, Fisher 1978). One task for the interpretive scholar is to try to describe and explain the relationship between the sense-making process of individuals and the people in their relevant environment (Weick, 1979)

Clearly, one of the most prominent persons in the relevant environment of organizational members is their superior (used interchangeably with the words manager and leader in this text) Some researchers have contemplated the relationship between the sense-making process of subordinates and leadership (for example Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Fairhurst, Rogers, & Sarr, 1987, Czarniawska-Joerges & Joerges, 1988). Some researchers (for example, Weick, 1979, Smircich & Morgan, 1982, Pondy, 1978) have speculated about how responsible leaders are for influencing the meanings and hence the understandings of individuals. Smircich and Morgan (1982) argue for a very strong relationship between leadership and sense-making. They define leadership as being "realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others (p 258) They contend that leadership is attributed "to those members who structure experience in meaningful ways. . . e.g., by mobilizing meaning , articulating and defining what has previously remained implicit or unsaid, by inventing images and meanings that provide a focus for new attention, and by consolidating, confronting, or changing prevailing wisdom" (p. 258).

Similar theoretical positions have been taken by other researchers but little evidence has been accumulated. For instance, Peters (1978, p.6) suggests that a leader can interpret history "By articulating a particular version of events, the leader can alter people's perception of what has been happening." Pondy (1978, p. 95) speculates about how leaders define reality with an historical example in mind:

> The real power of Martin Luther King was not only that he had a dream, but that he could describe it, that it became public, and therefore accessible to millions of people This dual

> capacity (surely it is much more than a mere trait) to make sense of things and to put them into language meaningful to large number of people gives the person who has it enormous leverage.

In contrast, Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges (1988, p. 188) have studied how linguistic artifacts--such as labels, metaphors, and platitudes--enable leaders to manage meaning by "explaining, coloring, and familiarizing." Could leaders, therefore, influence the sense-making process of subordinates by putting a label, like participation, on organizational activities? Weick (1985) tells us that labels can remove ambiguity. Interestingly, according to Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges (1988, p. 176),

> . . . labels differ, however, in the degree of their concreteness, and therefore in the degree of ambiguity they are able to remove. . . . Broad, abstract labels [for instance] permit a flexible redefinition of steps to be taken. . . . Labels are not neutral "sorting" devices Once learned, they influence subsequent action.

They suggest that leaders could use linguistic artifacts to "construct" reality for others They go so far as to say that "the right, and even the obligation, to define shared meaning is part of the cultural definition of authority itself" (Czarniawska-Joerges & Joerges, 1988, p 188)

These studies have emphasized control as the outcome variable The research above implies that managing or constructing meaning is a conscious and often-occurring event for leaders Relatedly, these conscious acts initiated by the leader seem quite directive, e g construct reality, define issues, consolidate prevailing wisdom The study presented here challenges these implications Rather than looking at the degree of control a leader exerts or establishes through communication this study explores the affect the leader has on the sense that subordinates ultimately make of organizational phenomena and communicate to others. In addition, prior studies imply that all subordinates make sense of a communication event similarly through this management or construction of meaning by the leader This assumption neglects a body of research on the processual and differentiated relationship between individual superior/subordinate dyads. an example of this research is the leader-member exchange (LMX) model (Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975) which has primarily grown out of social exchange theory (Hollander,1958, 1960, 1961).

Regrettably, very little research exists that addresses the *communication* exchanges that occur that might give clues to how leaders manage meaning. A few exceptions are Fairhurst, Rogers, and Sarr's (1987) and Watson's (1982) studies of superior/subordinate control patterns These studies utilized utterances as the unit of analysis and looked at the relationships between an utterance and the utterance immediately preceding it (the interact). Both studies utilized versions of Bateson's (1958) category system of dominant (one up) statements, submissive statements (one down) and equivalence statements (one across)

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In Watson's (1982) laboratory study, she showed support for her hypotheses that 1) leaders show resistance to and subordinates show compliance with each other's attempts to control the relationship, and 2) leaders exercised multiple response options in contrast with the subordinate's more structured responses.

Fairhurst and colleagues conducted their study of relational control at a manufacturing facility. Their study supported the hypotheses that 1) there is a negative relation between a manager's dominance of the subordinate in their communication and the manager's perception of the level of the subordinate's desire for decisional involvement, and 2) there is a negative relation between the manager's dominance of the subordinate in their communication and the manager's understanding of the subordinate.

Both studies lend support to the notion that leaders do influence subordinates through the *management of communication flow* [i.e. one up, one down, or one across statements) but not necessarily the *management of meaning*. Whereas the exchange models do not capture the communication interaction that occurs in the relationship development, studies of pairs of utterances do not capture the relationship development outside of the particular interaction being studied and seem to concentrated heavily on the issue of control.

The exploratory study presented here utilizes interview and observation techniques in an attempt to capture that "common sense of work life" in light of the sense making of individuals in differentiated relationships with their superiors within a particular context--a participatory management context--at a particular organization.

Methodology

Research Site and Participants

This study was conducted at an organization that serves as a support facility to students, faculty, and staff at a large midwestern university. This support facility is a center for technical operations that provides services for instruction and research. The organization employees approximately 150 people including full-time employees and a substantial number of part-time employees.

One particular work group at this organization was selected for this study because, after a number of informational interviews with various organizational members at various levels, it seemed that these organizational members, as well as the researchers, agreed that this particular work group highly epitomized the participative atmosphere at the center. The work group consisted of ten employees and one group leader. This particular work group is involved in developing and providing computer networking facilities to members of the university. Although the average tenure of the group members is five years this group has only recently (within the last year) been brought together with each other and with this particular group leader.

Employees at the center and in this work group routinely work on very technical tasks in an ever-changing field. They also work on equipment in the million dollar range on a daily basis. A certain

degree of trust seems inherent in the superior/subordinate relationship in order for routine, daily operations to take place. Although the success or financial status of the center was not a locus of discussion, the general good health of the center is evidenced to some degree by the rapid and extensive growth and expansion over the past ten years and the growth and expansion plans currently being discussed.

The group leader reports directly to the director of the center but the lines on the organizational chart are considerably blurred. Direct reporting procedures are limited and have minimal significance. It is sufficient to note that the group leader has a very visible and important position within the center. Historically, this work group has not been an extremely influential one when compared to other work groups at the center. The decision to designate this particular person as group leader and reorganize the group is seen as directly linked to the need for greater emphasis on the work this group engages in.

All of these employees have had college-level training or its equivalent in technical fields. Nine of the participants were male and one was female. The average age was approximately 35-40.

The In-Depth Interviews With Members of the Work Group

Through a series of interviews, individual work group members, including the manager, were asked to talk about the participatory style of their manager and what it means to "participate." Prior to doing the interviews this researcher was introduced to group members, sat in on several group meetings, accompanied the group leader on routine activities, became acquainted with general practices, procedures, and group members, and enabled the group members an opportunity to get to know and feel comfortable with the researcher.

In this study, an open-ended, non-directive interview technique was used in order to encourage the interviewees to express their ideas about participation in their own terms and to allow an opportunity to tease out the sense-making process. The general idea was to get each person to give their own context for their understanding of the issues discussed.

The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to two hours. Extensive notes were taken during the interviews and were later transcribed in detail. With the exception of one, the interviews were tape recorded in order to increase the accuracy and detail of the transcriptions. This interview data was analyzed in a holistic form in order to preserve the context of each individual's sense-making process. In addition, the interview data was broken down into thought units and a form of content analysis--perhaps better called a q-sort-- was utilized to investigate what trends or patterns, if any developed when all of the interviews were looked at together.

In this case, the interpretive nature of the research questions did not theoretically or practically lend itself to the use of pre-established or theoretically derived category systems. Therefore, categories were developed from the data as an empirical coding scheme. Relatedly, quantitative analysis was not performed on this data because in an absolute sense each thought unit, in many cases, represented more than one particular issue. Thus, in a strict sense the meaning of each category is

imprecise. Relatedly, the number of thought units sorted into each category cannot be directly reflective of the strength or importance of that category.

Results

Results of the Coding Process

The issues brought up in the interviews resulted in 217 cards or units sorted into nine categories. The result was a nested category system that describes tensions and contradictions between the participatory and nonparticipatory nature of the work group, and in particular, the tensions that exist and contradictions that are lived out when through the processes of decision-making and information-sharing.

Table 1

Category	# of messages coded into that category
Information Sharing	10
Lack of Information Sharing	19
Both	6
Decisions made by Superior	24
Decisions made by Subordinate	30
No decision made	53
Recognition	2
Lack of Recognition	6
Management Style	27
Personal Statements, Examples, etc.	18

Four categories dealing with decision-making emerged with a total of 127 units in those categories. The reader must be cautioned not to place too much importance on the number of units coded into each category. In a strict sense the number of units in each category cannot be statistically compared. Each unit cannot be construed has having the same or comparable weight as any other unit. For instance, just because one issue was brought up fewer times than another issue, this in no way implies that the issue is in some way less important than the other in a comparative sense. The number of units associated with each category is in no way a precise measure of importance, but more simply, a representation of what subordinates said.

Specifically, the sorting process revealed that participation meant that superiors made decisions, decisions were jointly made, decisions were made by the subordinate, and no decisions were made. This last category, the largest category related to decision making, further subdivided into four categories. These categories were: 1) "no decision is made because it isn't needed" or "we know what to do because it's just the way things are around here," 2) "no decision is made due to

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indecisiveness," 3) "no decision is made due to a conscious decision not to decide," and 4) "no decision is made because of confusion over who is to make the decision."

In addition, the sorting process revealed that participation meant that information was shared and that information was not shared, and that individuals were recognized for their contributions and that they were not. (See Appendix A for category definitions and examples.)

Analysis of the Interviews as a Whole and Observations

Through extensive interviews with subordinates and the superior and observations of this work group over a three-month period, some general feeling for "the way things are done" in this work group lent insight to how people in this group made sense of participation.

When subordinates were asked what the leader did to facilitate this participatory process some responses that give a flavor for the range of responses were:

"I discuss things in general with [my supervisor] and then he lets me do my job."

"I keep waiting for [my supervisor] to say something that sounds like a request but that never happens."

"We have a list of goals or priorities and [my supervisor] gave them to us."

"[My supervisor] is a coordinator."

"If [my supervisor] comes in and talks to me about something I figure that's a priority."

"No one gives you a list of things to do--you use your own judgement."

"[My supervisor] doesn't want to know specifics--I have 110% control over my work."

When the leader was asked what he does to facilitate the participatory atmosphere he said, for example:

"I believe in management by walking around."

"I have a goal-oriented structure."

"Every morning, if I can, I talk to everyone in the work group."

"I care what they do and if they do it creatively."

"They are dealing with $30 million in equipment--I have to trust them to do things."

"I tell them what is important; I don't tell them what to do."

"You work with me not for me."

"I don't engage in superior/subordinate relationships that much--I avoid it because we are a team not a tree."

"I don't track individual tasks--although they are important."

"I try to be aware of what they [subordinates] are doing but in a way where I am not watching."

"Something is as official as it gets around here when it gets in the minutes of the meeting."

Through the interviews, a general picture emerged of an environment where general job responsibilities of individuals and goals of the work group are determined by management with very little involvement or "participation" from the work group members. In contrast, each subordinate has

virtually total control over his or her own work. One subordinate seemed to sum it up well by saying "everyone does whatever they want within the general realm of *these are your responsibilities*."

The observations of the group meetings supported this view and provided an opportunity to collect examples of the communications that occurred regularly between the leader and the subordinates. In particular, the leader managed the meaning of when and how to participate in these meetings by interjecting very brief comments when subordinates were going into too much detail about their work. For instance, he would say, "OK, fine. You and I can talk about that more later--anything else?" or "Let's go on--we can talk about that later." In addition, he made it clear what areas were off limits for participating by presenting them as givens. For example, he would say:

"The current thinking is . . ."

"I've told you what's going on and that's what's going on--nothing more, nothing less."

"The sense around here is that . . ."

"The key here is to figure out how we can get this machine [the supercomputer] without going to the state."

"V gave this the pic so keep V informed. To the extent you keep me informed--great, but he's the one who needs to know."

"If you think it is right, do it, but think very seriously about it."

Discussion

From the results of the interviews, observations, and content analysis, we get a fairly clear picture of a participatory work group that is characterized by a series of contradictions that exist between areas where participation is encouraged, allowed, and expected and areas where non-participation is expected and assumed. Within this context, we find a group leader who manages the meaning of participation by avoiding details, not assigning tasks or priorities, and remaining vague in certain areas where participation is encouraged. At the same time, the leader presents things as explicit, factual, and given in areas where non-participation is expected and assumed.

From an interpretive viewpoint, we can only make sense of what is going on by looking at the communicative activities within context. For instance, this organization is composed of highly technical individuals. This work group epitomizes this notion. Participation within this context could mean very different things than participation in another, less technical environment. People in highly technical fields are commonly used to working on highly complex tasks and in complex fields in which they have had extensive training. Technical tasks commonly involve a lot of work where individuals work alone as well. It may be that little supervision is deemed necessary. In addition, it may be impossible for work group members, including the leader, to understand the complex nature of every individual's work. This may eliminate the possibility of having participation at the group level.

These contextual factors seem particularly relevant to the results in the category "no decision was made." Technical matters may make it impossible to make a decision at that particular time. One subordinate said, "sometimes I am asked to give information today when I know it will be inaccurate tomorrow--do they want it accurate or do they want it now?"

Another contextual factor that is relevant is that the leader was still considered to be new to the group. Concerns related to this were expressed by the leader:

"We are all still adjusting to each other."

"Many of these people may not understand me yet."

"It's taken a while for people to feel at ease--I'm not convinced we have got to that point yet."

"They still may think I have an ulterior motive."

If some subordinates feel like they are still adjusting to and getting to know their leader, when the leader leaves areas open for the subordinate to use his or her own discretion it could be interpreted by the subordinate as indecisiveness or the subordinate may simply become confused. More specifically, the comments of the supervisor indicate that he purposely does not make decisions at times in order to give subordinates the "opportunity" or "freedom" to go in the direction they want to or think best. The comments of subordinates indicate that the superior's "lack of decision making" is in fact at times interpreted as an opportunity for subordinates to decide but this is not always the case.

What is most interesting though, is that we find that, in contrast to what is implied by Smircich and Morgan, the management of meaning is not something that a leader does that is then experienced similarly by all subordinates and in relationship to all issues. As we can see here, when decisions were not made by superiors or jointly, in some cases subordinates interpreted this as an area where they had decision-making authority. In other cases, subordinates interpreted this as indecisiveness on the part of the leader, confusion over who should make the decision or a conscious decision on the part of the leader not to make a decision. If subordinates understand participation to mean "when my superior doesn't make a decision I am free to make my own decision" it would be logical to conclude that there would be little confusion and frustration resulting. If, on the other hand, a subordinate understands participation to mean "when my supervisor asks for my input we jointly make decisions and when my supervisor doesn't I can do nothing but wait for him or her to make the decision" it seems logical to conclude that confusion and frustration is likely to be the result.

Implications for future study in this area are great. For instance, is there a relationship between the type of organization--in this case a technically-oriented one--and the way participation will be lived out at that organization? Although it seems logical that there would be a relationship it is also clear that exploration in this area will still leave much room for questions because in this context, although all of the work group members were involved in highly technical work, subordinates did not all experience participation similarly.

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What factors might help explain this? Although not tested here, a LMX measure of "in-group/out-group" members might prove interesting. This group was such a small group that in-group/out-group distinctions were not readily apparent--if they are in fact there at all. Certainly, work group members that have more interaction with the leader and are privy to more details than others about work related issues and/or feelings and concern of the leader would be in a better position to accurately interpret the leader's communicative activities.

Relatedly, a subordinate may interpret participation based on their role in their work group. Some support for this idea has been provided in Miller's (1988) research which showed that when employees viewed their roles as nonsupervisory (ones in which they had assigned tasks, "a job," and did not interdependently work with others) they characterized participation differently from organizational members who viewed their roles as having supervisory responsibilities (ones in which they were interdependently working with others). In this study, some people had the responsibility of managing the work of other employees (primarily part-time student employees) while other people in this work group did not have these kinds of responsibilities.

The contradictions in this work group surfaced in three general areas: decision making, information sharing, and recognition. In this participatory atmosphere, comments by subordinates indicate that there are times when you participate through forms of decision making and information sharing and times when you engage in neither. An interesting thing to note is that some subordinates at some times interpret this positively (i.e.,"Thankfully, my supervisor lets me do my job.") while others at other times interpret it negatively (i.e., "I wish my supervisor would make more decisions.") There is also some indication that recognition is limited in those areas where subordinates have total autonomy. In general though, this was presented in a positive light, i.e., "We don't have performance reviews--I think they are worthless." There are implications here for the relationship between participation and satisfaction. Are subordinates more satisfied if they understand the "clues" leaders give them about when participation is appropriate? Or, on the other hand, are subordinates more satisfied if the leader negotiates participation individually and enables (allows?) each employee to participate or be involved to whatever degree he or she feels most comfortable?

Relatedly, in a participatory atmosphere does the manager's job become one of managing these contradictions? Is the leader successful or effective when the meaning of participation has been managed in such a way that subordinates are able to interpret messages by their superior as "opportunities" for participation while interpreting "off limits" areas as givens or assumptions rather than areas where they can't, aren't invited to, or are left out of participation?

Despite the exploratory nature of this study, it is important to note where, when, and how specific limitations inherent in the study may have impacted the results. In addition, as is common in both exploratory and naturalistic work, this study's strength is its heuristic value.

Coding interview data raises some issues that may be problematic. Messages taken out of context could be misinterpreted by coders. It may be unclear at times whether or not the subject of the message is the subordinate's immediate supervisor or others higher up in the organization. It also may be unclear as to whether the speaker was trying to communicate a feeling about management in general or a feeling about their specific supervisor. In open ended, somewhat nondirected interviews it is common for interviewees to talk at length about issues unrelated to the original question asked and/or the research questions. When this it becomes difficult to decide if a particular group of thoughts or messages should be coded at all and if so in what form. Due to the exploratory nature of this data, these messages were coded but they were coded into a category entitled "broad, general, or personal statements, examples, etc."

How leaders communicate and "manage the meaning" of organizational issues and events becomes a very exciting and interesting phenomenon when coupled with an atmosphere or management style that inherently conflicts with traditional notions of management like participation. However, this kind of atmosphere provides the perfect opportunity for leaders to act idiosyncratically and manage different issues, events and people differently. This atmosphere may be one in which contradictions should be looked at as the norm rather than as something unusual or a flaw that needs to be corrected or eliminated. This in turn makes for a very confusing but exciting area for organizational communication research.

APPENDIX A
Coding Manual

What does it mean to "participate" at CUPP*
(* The organizational title and all names of organizational members have been disguised.)

Directions: You have been given two piles of cards. Each card contains one thought. One pile contains thoughts expressed by organizational subordinates. The other pile contains thoughts expressed by their corresponding manager. Take either pile and code the messages into categories according to the instructions below. Afterwards, do the same with the second pile using the same categories to code the messages but be sure to keep the cards from each pile separate so it is clear which messages were communicated by subordinates and which were communicated by the manager. Any card may be put into only one category. Use the following guidelines to make your decisions.

1. Informing
Put in this category all messages that refer to how or when information is collected or disseminated either upward or downward or the nature of that information.
After you have decided that a particular message refers to informing, then decide which of the following two categories best describes that message:

A. Information sharing
Put in this category all messages that refer to how or when information is shared or the nature of information that is shared
Examples:
S tries to get input from people
The price for attending the meeting is you have to share information with us
Every morning, if I can, I talk to everyone in the work group
Several times a day L comes in to talk about what I am working on
I interact with everyone
Anybody can talk to anybody
We have a number of informal meetings

B. Lack of Information Sharing
Put in this category all messages that refer to how or when information is withheld or the nature of information that is withheld.
Examples:
They don't tell you anything you don't need to know
S isn't a great one for communicating downward; he has a lot more interesting things to do
I don't have any idea about money issues--you're not involved in those things

C. Both information sharing and lack of information sharing
Put in this category all messages that refer to the simultaneous sharing and lack of sharing of information.
Examples:
The closer you come down the hierarchy the more likely you will be asked, as you move up it is less likely to happen for someone to ask
We talk, in general, but we don't go into details

2. Decision-Making
Put in this category any messages that refer to how or when decisions are made, who they are made by, the nature of those decisions, or the manner in which those decisions are carried out. After you have decided that a particular message refers to decision-making protocol, then decide which of the following two categories best describes that message:

A. Decisions are made by superiors
Put in this category all messages that refer to how or when decisions are made formally by higher-level managers and passed down to subordinates, the nature of those decisions that are handled in this manner, or the manner in which those decisions are carried out.
Examples:
Decisions are handed down and you don't know where it is coming from
S is authoritative only in win-lose situations; then everyone is going to live with it
Decisions come from on high
I live with the decision
The engineering group has a priority list and S gave it to them

B. Decisions are made by subordinates
Put in this category all messages that refer to how or when decisions are made informally by subordinates, the nature of those decisions that are handled in this manner, or the manner in which those decisions are carried out.
Examples:
No one walks in and says "This is your 10 tasks for the day"
I feel like you do what you do to get it done
People do what they are good at
People associate with who they need to to get the job done

C. Decision are made by superiors and subordinates
Put in this category all references to decisions that are made jointly or in part by the superior and in part by the subordinate
Examples:
We agree on projects and I carry them out at my own pace 95% of the time
I don't ell them what to do--just what is important

D. No decision is made
Put into this category all messages that refer to a feeling of confusion, indecisiveness, disorganization, etc. or an inference or conclusion drawn about others that refers to confusion or indecisiveness or activities or behaviors that are given as evidence or examples of confusion
Examples:
A consensus is never formed
I get mixed signals
Indecision goes all the way up the line
It's loose here--too loose, you can't expect people to read your minds
Here I feel like an organized person that is disorganized and I don't like it

3. Recognition

A. Recognition
Put in this category all messages that refer to a feeling of recognition or appreciativeness or activities or behaviors that exemplify that feeling.
Example:
My supervisor will thank me for doing something for him.

B. Lack of Recognition
Put in this category all messages that refer to a feeling of lack of recognition or unappreciativeness or activities or behaviors that exemplify that feeling.
Examples:
There is never recognition of the time it takes to work together
You don't always get the recognition

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4. **Management style**
   Put in this category all messages that refer to feelings, inferences, or conclusions drawn about the general style of the manager or activities that are presented as evidence of this style that do not make explicit reference to information sharing, decision making, or recognition.
   Examples:
   I believe in management by walking around
   I have a goal-oriented structure
   Mr. K is my father, I'm S
   We aren't buddies, we don't hang out together--but I think of them as my friends
   I wear tennis shoes and my office looks like a junk yard--to some people it matters and they want me to explain and I try to
   I don't like structure
   I care what they do and if they do it creatively

5. **Broad, general, personal statements, examples, etc.**
   Put in this category all messages that do not directly relate to anything above and refer to such things as hopes, wishes, speculations, past occurrences in other places of employment, etc
   Examples:
   "I'm a loner."
   "Once when I worked at . . ."

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